



**NEW RELEASES**

# Tár

Lydia Tár (Blanchett) is widely considered one of the greatest living composer-conductors. An EGOT winner who guest teaches at Juilliard; she is also the first female chief conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic. Gifted at orchestrating music but perhaps even more talented at orchestrating people around her, Tár is at the very peak of her career when she is threatened with a creeping fall from grace.

Todd Field's long-awaited follow up to *Little Children* and *In the Bedroom* is an exquisite and well-crafted provocative drama of art and power, laced with dry humour and charged by a sensational and spectacular performance from Cate Blanchett. A truly stirring, unmissable feat of cinema, that may just be one of the best films of the year.

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Todd Field's *Tár* is a two-hour-38-minute slow dive into the increasingly alienating psychology of a world-famous orchestra conductor. It moves to a rarefied tempo: philharmonic politics, contested cello solo auditions and live-recording contract negotiations for one of Mahler's more daunting works. It is replete with classical-music-world in-jokes and casually caustic namedrops that must mystify anyone who failed to graduate from Juilliard with honours before pursuing a doctorate in Advanced Stravinsky. It has absolutely no business being even remotely watchable, and yet here it is, one of the most grippingly brilliant films of the year, featuring, in Cate Blanchett's mesmerising central turn, perhaps the season's first truly irreplaceable star performance.

Lydia Tár (Blanchett), the conductor of a major German orchestra and a woman refreshingly portrayed as almost entirely without humility, takes to the stage for a live *New Yorker* interview about her illustrious career. The conversation is forbiddingly inside-baseball, if baseball were an elite pastime mastered – or maestro-ed – only by a handful of monomaniacal practitioners. But it quickly emerges that what Tár says is less important than the way she says it – the minutest shifts in Blanchett's body language and intonation speak volumes about the quick-minded, prickly, grandiose, intimidatingly talented creature she is playing. There's an apocryphal story that Beethoven partly wrote his rule-breaking Fifth, with its famous four-note opening motif, in order to grab the attention of potential dozers in the audience. But ba-ba-ba-baaam etc. requires three flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, three bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, strings and percussion. Blanchett achieves a similar effect with the slightest narrowing of her cold, shrewd gaze.

Tár is a musical polymath at the crest of her career. She chairs Accordion, a scholarship fund run by an investment group whose head (Mark Strong) is himself a hobbyist conductor. She is about to release a book and is finally, after a pandemic delay, going to complete her collection of Mahler recordings by tackling his Fifth Symphony. She is also in a long-term relationship with her First Violin, Sharon (a beautifully pained Nina Hoss), with whom she's raising a daughter, and she is considering replacing her assistant conductor. Her doggedly loyal PA Francesca (Noémie Merlant), an Accordion alum, hopes to be considered for the position.

In the early going, the film is largely a series of episodes illuminating Tár's demanding-verging-on-bullying professionalism: her brusque treatment of the clearly adoring Francesca; a brutal verbal confrontation with her daughter's schoolyard tormentor; and the acidic dressing-down she doles out to a Juilliard student who dares to reject Bach on the basis of his 'misogyny'. The film's treatment of hot-button identity politics and art/artist separation issues, especially as scathingly rejected by a gay woman at the pinnacle of her profession, is just one aspect of the bravery of Field's uncompromisingly intelligent script, and of Blanchett's completely uncompromising portrayal.

Stranger notes begin to sound. There are unwanted, desperate emails from Krista, a disgraced ex-Accordion graduate, the nature of whose relationship with Tár is murky. The apartment to which Tár retreats for work is suddenly beset by odd, unlocatable noises that ironically recall an offhand remark about a classical composer who believed that sensitivity to sound was a hallmark of moral probity. And she is immediately smitten with the orchestra's newest addition, Olga (Sophie Kauer), a gifted young cellist from Russia, finding her Gen-Z irreverence both aggravating and intoxicating. This is not the first time Blanchett has played a worldly lesbian intent on seducing a younger woman, but where in *Carol* the attraction felt lustrous, warm and velvet to the touch, such instincts are thin, needling, and indefinably but unmistakably predatory in Lydia Tár.

Field imbues *Tár* with horror and thriller textures, abetted not just by an exceptional cast but by Florian Hoffmeister's superbly muted photography and an unobtrusively uneasy score from Hildur Guðnadóttir. But most of the film's subtly queasy mood comes direct from Blanchett, who is in every scene and uses every aspect of her physicality – her costuming, her gestures, the styling of her hair – to embody the crescendos and diminuendos of this acerbic cautionary tale of genius and cruelty and towering, monstrous ego. Revered by all, desired by many but loved perhaps only by herself, at one point Tár is conducting her final rehearsal of Mahler's Fifth. She throws her arms wide and her head back, and it is hard to tell if the ecstatic blare of sound comes from the instruments or emanates from deep inside her, from the cavernous, windowless, soundproofed auditorium she has where most people have a heart.

**Jessica Kiang, *Sight and Sound*, 3 September 2022**

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**TÁR**

*Directed by:* Todd Field  
©: Focus Features LLC  
*a Standard Film Company / EMJAG production*  
*Presented by:* Focus Features  
*This project was completed with assistance from the:*  
Berlin Brandenburg Film Commission, Thailand Film Office  
*Executive Producers:* Stephen Kelliher,  
Compton Ross, Phil Hunt, David Schiff, Nigel Wooll, Cate Blanchett,  
Marcus Loges, Uwe Schott  
*Produced by:* Todd Field  
*Producers:* Alexandra Milchan, Scott Lambert  
*Co-producer:* Sebastian Fahr-Brix  
*Unit Production Manager:* Nigel Wooll  
*Post-production Supervisor:* Emma Zee  
*1st Assistant Director:* Sebastian Fahr-Brix  
*Casting:* Avy Kaufman, Simone Bär,  
Alexandra Montag, Jeremy Zimmerman  
*Written by:* Todd Field  
*Cinematographer:* Florian Hoffmeister  
*Film Editor:* Monika Willi  
*Production Designer:* Marco Bittner Rosser  
*Costume Designer:* Bina Daigeler  
*Score by:* Hildur Gudnadóttir  
*Music Supervisor:* Lucy Bright  
*Sound:* Roland Winke  
*Filmed at:* LichtHaus Berlin

**Cast**

Cate Blanchett (*Lydia Tár*)  
Noémie Merlant (*Francesca Lentini*)  
Nina Hoss (*Sharon Goodnow*)  
Sophie Kauer (*Olga Metkina*)  
Julian Glover (*Andris Davis*)  
Allan Corduner (*Sebastian Brix*)  
Mark Strong (*Eliot Kaplan*)  
Sylvia Flote (*Krista Taylor*)  
Adam Gopnik (*himself*)  
Mila Bogojevic (*Petra*)  
Zethphan Smith-Gneist (*Max*)

USA 2022©  
158 mins

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**NEW RELEASES****Corsage**

Continues from 27 Dec

**Enys Men**

Continues from Fri 13 Jan

**Tár**

From Fri 20 Jan

**EO**

From Fri 3 Feb

**Blue Jean**

From Fri 10 Feb; Fri 10 Feb 18:10 (+ Q&A with director-screenwriter  
Georgia Oakley and producer Hélène Sifre)

**Creature**

From Fri 24 Feb; Fri 24 Feb 18:10 (+ intro and Q&A with director  
Asif Kapadia and other members of the filmmaking team)

**Broker**

From Fri 24 Feb

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